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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 000442

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TAGS: PGOV PREL MOPS MARR PTER IZ

SUBJECT: CDA, CG AND PM DISCUSS CONTRACTS, RECONCILIATION, THE MEK AND ARAB-KURD TENSIONS

Classified By: Pol-Mil Minister Counselor Michael H. Corbin for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (S/NF) Summary: In their regular weekly meeting with Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki on February 19, Charge d' Affairs Butenis and Commanding General MNF-I Odierno pressed al-Maliki to get GOI action on critical, long-delayed civil aviation contracts, emphasized that Iraq should be aware of the international political cost of mishandling the Mujaheddin e-Khalq at Camp Ashraf, and sought the PM's views on tensions between the GoI and KRG. The PM raised his desire to see a Sons of Iraq (SoI) leader detained, and mentioned some former insurgents he believed were ready to reconcile with the Iraqi Government. The PM reiterated his complete commitment to GOI assurances on the treatment of the MeK and said inflammatory statements against the MeK were not the position of the GOI. On Kurd-Arab tensions, he said he was not going to react to extreme statements by KRG officials and that although he had serious constitutional issues with the behavior of the KRG, he was not going to act impulsively or suddenly against the KRG. End Summary.

Civil Aviation Contracts Lapse

¶2. (S/NF) CG Odierno told the PM that the U.S. had worked hard with the Minister of Transportation to get him to execute a number of civil aviation contracts that had lapsed, providing for critical maintenance and training for civilian airspace management. The Minister had been unwilling to sign the contracts for months despite the fact it was not a question of money, as there were sufficient funds available, the CG said. The CG remarked that the Minister of Transportation had said he needed authority from the PM to sign the contracts. The PM replied that he was unsure why the Minister had not executed the contracts, as the Minister did not need the PM's approval to act. He said he understood the importance of this issue and would direct the Minister to execute the contracts immediately.

Arrest of SoI Leader

¶3. (S/NF) PM Maliki raised the issue of Adel Mashadani, a former SoI leader, who he said was deeply involved in the insurgency and was acting with impunity between Taji and Baghdad. The PM said he wanted the Iraqi Security Forces to arrest him as soon as possible. The CG advised that he had received the PM's information on Mashadani's behavior and would devise a plan for Coalition Forces to call him in and to arrest him. This would take a couple of days to arrange. The PM agreed fully with this course of action, stating it would be "much better" than ISF arresting him, given the risk of trying to apprehend Mashadani on his own ground.

Reconciliation Efforts

14. (S/NF) PM Maliki noted that he had been in contact with Abu Azam (Tamimi), a former insurgent, and that he had agreed to reconcile with him. "I am ready to take him back and forgive the past," the PM said. The PM asked the CG to contact the local military commander to assist in aiding Abu Azaam's transition back into favor with GoI. In illustrating his sincerity to reconcile with former Iraqi insurgents, the PM said he was willing to reconcile with any group in Iraq if they were willing, just as he was ready to act against any group that continued violence. This was proven by his willingness to take on the Sadrists after they refused to renounce violence, Maliki emphasized. Additionally, the PM renounce violence, Maliki emphasized. Additionally, the PM noted that he had been in discussions with Sheik Jabouri, a former AQI spokesman. The PM stated that he had accepted Jabouri back and asked that U.S. forces not arrest or detain him.

Completion of Security Handover at Camp Ashraf

15. (S/NF) The CG told the PM that the U.S. will complete the transfer of Camp Ashraf and the MeK to Iraqi security forces on February 20. The CG told Maliki that he was concerned that Iraq not take actions that would lead the MeK to react in a way that would spur international criticism and criticism of the GOI and the USG. He said that he feared that the residents of Camp Ashraf would try to instigate incidents with Iraqi Army units guarding the camp, especially if the GoI attempted to serve warrants or otherwise move MeK

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residents.

16. (S/NF) The PM assured the CG that there would not be any instigation by the GoI and that he would take things slowly. The MEK have killed more Shia'a Arabs and Kurds in Iraq than people realize; nevertheless, the GoI will abide by its written humanitarian assurances to the U.S. and its public statements that it will not forcibly return any of the Ashraf residents to Iran, Maliki stated. The CG encouraged the PM to take a measured approach to this issue to avoid potential problems. The PM reiterated his commitment and said the USG should not pay attention to some statements from members of the GOI, the policy was set by the PM.

Tensions between GoI and KRG

17. (S/NF) The Charge asked the PM about tensions between the GoI and KRG and specifically asked him about how his meeting with President Talabani had gone the day before. The PM immediately noted that the media was reporting that he would send 200 new police to Kirkuk. Nothing could be farther from the truth, the PM emphasized. He had made no such order and this was evidence of the misinformation on the Kurd-Arab issue. The PM remarked that President Talabani understood the situation very well. He said that President Talabani was not comfortable with actions the KRG was taking that were contrary to the Constitution and Iraqi law. Specifically he complained about the KRG opening "Embassies" abroad and moving with a Norwegian company to develop oil fields that could produce up to 200,000 barrels a day. The KRG sought to sell this oil and gain all the proceeds in addition to the 17 percent of the national budget it already received. Maliki said that since the KRG does not give money to the central government this was unfair to the rest of Iraq. "How can they sell our oil and not give the money back to the government," Maliki asked rhetorically.

18. (S/NF) Maliki said that the Kurds do not recognize the Iraqi Army. They still view them as the old Saddam-era IA,

Maliki said. They must recognize that the IA has been formed in accordance with a constitutional process. They don't allow the IA into some areas outside of the KRG. We can't let them be against our army that was created according to our constitution and has complete right to enter any part of Iraqi territory, he said. Despite these issues, Maliki said he was prepared to meet again with President Talabani upon the President's return from an official visit to S. Korea, in an effort to address these issues.

¶9. (S/NF) The Charge thanked the PM for his patience in the matter, noting that his concerns were well understood. The Charge encouraged the PM to avoid actions that could jeopardize the progress that had been achieved in Iraq including the international appreciation for the successful conduct of the recent provincial elections. The PM told the Charge that the Kurds were extremely critical of him in the media, calling him names and comparing him to Saddam Hussein.

Despite these outrageous statements from Kurdish leaders he said that he would continue to be patient and would not act impulsively. He noted that his only response to Kurdish attacks had been two articles in his defense in the Dawa party newspaper. Even these articles in his political party newspaper had been met with a storm of protest from the Kurds, and so he had committed not to publish any further articles defending himself. "I will not engage them in the media," he said.

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¶10. (S/NF) The CG noted that he was traveling to the KRG and would meet with President Barzani to discuss the situation and encourage all parties not to escalate tensions. The CG asked if the PM would still send a planned Dawa party delegation to the KRG for talks. The PM said that after Nijervan Barzani's strong statements in the U.S. against the Iraqi government, he had decided to let things settle down for a time. The delegation could travel in the future, he said.

¶11. (S/NF) The PM concluded that he wanted the same rights for all Arabs and Kurds. He said that he would not allow anyone to suppress the individual rights of Iraqi citizens, this included Christians and the few remaining Jews in Iraq. Iraq was rich in resources and there is enough for everyone, he said.

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